

DRESSED FOR THE COUNTRY: 1860-1900



1984

GRAPHIC
DESIGN

DRESSED FOR THE COUNTRY: 1860–1900

Exhibition organized by Edward Maeder and coordinated by Dale Carolyn Gluckman

Essay by Evelyn Ackerman

LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART



DRESSED FOR THE COUNTRY: 1860-1900



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FIGURE 1.

Multicolored Printed Silk Girl's Dress; United States, c. 1860–65 (no. 26).



INTRODUCTION TO THE EXHIBITION

EDWARD MAEDER

A hundred years ago, enjoyment of the outdoors as a desirable leisure-time activity was a fairly new phenomenon. Both large and small urban centers in America and Europe had grown to a great extent as a result of increased industrialization. Overpopulation and a lack of proper sanitation had turned many cities into unpleasant and dangerous places. In possession of an increasing amount of spare time, partially as a result of the recent invention of numerous labor-saving devices, city dwellers began to seek more congenial environments to which they might escape on weekends and for vacations. These forays into the countryside for sports and leisure activities were facilitated by the newly developed railroads and the improvement of living standards for the middle classes.

The creation of specific types of clothing for particular sports and outdoor activities did not occur until nearly the last decade of the nineteenth century. People at their leisure in the country were not really dressed comfortably for relaxed pastimes but were dressed, as in the city, to present themselves in a manner that would be acceptable to their peers, for one did not go to the country alone. Virtually every outdoor activity was a social one, with the possible exception of fishing. Social activities involved family, both immediate and extended, as well as neighbors and friends. A picnic, for example, was one of the few acceptable situations in which eligible young men could see and be seen by marriageable young ladies (pl. 1). Even children at play wore clothes just a little less elaborate than those they would have worn to church (pl. 2; figs. 1–2). Children were required to maintain a certain decorum and order, and much of their training took place on family outings.

Dressed for the Country: 1860–1900 was conceived during curatorial discussions of the museum's exhibition celebrating the 1984 Olympics, *A Day in the Country: Impressionism and the French Landscape*. It was felt that a visual presentation of period clothing from America and Europe, shown in the context of photographic blowups of contem-

porary pen and ink drawings by the American artist Charles Dana Gibson, would shed some light on the diverse reasons why people of the late nineteenth century spent more time outdoors. Fashion became virtually universal with the simultaneous publication of *Harper's Bazar* on both sides of the Atlantic after 1868. Thus it is possible to paint a generalized, but accurate picture of the end of the century based on American and European (particularly English) costumes in the museum's collection, which includes a broad range of Victorian dress for men, women, and children. Since transformations in men's dress were minimal during this era, the focus of the exhibition, and of Evelyn Ackerman's fine essay in this catalogue, is women's clothing, which went through the most extreme changes between 1860 and 1900. These changes are a barometer reflecting trends in society's attitude toward women, toward personal hygiene, and toward sports and leisure themselves, the subjects of *Dressed for the Country: 1860–1900*.

FIGURE 2.

Burgundy, White, and Gray Silk Taffeta Girl's Dress; United States, c. 1877–80 (no. 34).



DRESSED FOR THE COUNTRY: 1860-1900

EVELYN ACKERMAN

As in all ages, clothing in nineteenth-century America and Europe was a means of expressing the underlying values of society and its aesthetic priorities. During the Victorian period both men's and women's dress reflected a recently industrialized society's preoccupation with material things. Throughout the 1800s the dominant forms in feminine fashions reflected women's dependence and helplessness by rendering them unable to move with ease or do anything strenuous. This was accomplished by means of tightly laced corsets, heavy undergarments, very small armholes, and other means of bodily confinement through dress. Ostentatious women's costume provided a way for the newly rich man to advertise his ability to care for his wife and daughters; their clothing was the most obvious means to let the world know how successful he was.

Men were in charge of the Victorian business world. The expanding economy over which they presided in the 1860s was mirrored by the expanded and exaggerated silhouette of women's clothing. In the 1870s and '80s, when wide skirts disappeared, they were replaced by narrower ones that had complicated, over-ornamented surfaces reflecting the conspicuous consumption characteristic of the period. Women's place throughout the century was in the home, as wife, childbearer, and mother. Even middle-class houses were usually large and filled with children. Not only did the well-



to-do family man not want his wife to work, he wanted others to know that she did not have to leave the home. Servants were abundantly available from a large labor pool of the less fortunate.

As a result of the Industrial Revolution large segments of the rural population in both Europe and America began moving to the urban centers where factories were located. In these new settings men continued to play their traditional village games, while many city dwellers who visited the country or traveled, often by railroad, had contact with sports like hunting and fishing for the first time. The seaside, inland lakes, and rivers were now readily accessible, and increasing numbers of people participated in swimming, sailing, and rowing. Such excursions placed an emphasis on physical activity, and fashion slowly responded to the demands of more vigorous recreation.

The ideal of sportsmanship was first developed in the nineteenth century from team games played in the English public schools. These games spread to universities and specialized clubs in England and America. Besides team games, other athletic pursuits began to be included in the sports curriculum of these institutions and organizations. The competitive nature of organized sports led to the need for universal rules. With their adoption, teams from widespread localities could play against one another. The need to distinguish between teams led to the development of special sports uniforms.

MEN'S CLOTHING: 1860–1900

As economic conditions and educational opportunities improved in the second half of the nineteenth century, and as leisure time increased, more and more men participated in athletics of some kind. Thus the need arose for appropriate sports clothing for men, who were unhampered by

the same codes of modesty to which women were subjected. By the 1860s and '70s a steady stream of new inventions, the introduction of new textiles, and the growth of the ready-made clothing industry (trends that, as we shall see, affected women's dress as well) made it possible to begin fulfilling this function.

Reflecting the Victorian male's need for conformity and respectability, masculine fashions between 1860 and 1900 showed much less variety and flamboyance than did feminine fashions of the same period. Throughout the nineteenth century a man's dress generally consisted of three basic elements: coat, waistcoat, and trousers. Within these confines more changes appeared in detailing than in cut and style.

Fitted, knee-length breeches, the favored form of pants for men during the eighteenth century, survived into the 1800s for horseback riding, especially when hunting. Long trousers were the mode for every day, though their cut varied somewhat during the Victorian era. Knickerbockers, a loose kind of breeches, made their appearance in the 1860s, being used for country and sports wear. Their popularity continued well into the twentieth century.

During the 1800s the two main types of daytime coat worn by men were the frock coat and morning coat. The former evolved from a military coat worn during the last years of the eighteenth century. In either a single- or double-breasted form it had a long waist, which was seamed, and a short, full skirt. The frock coat was the favored style until the 1850s, when the morning coat, which had evolved from a curved, cutaway coat worn for horseback riding earlier in the century, became dominant. Each coat incorporated the *de rigueur* standards of perfect cut and fit set by Beau Brummell, the most influential arbiter of men's fashion during the early part of the century.

Brummell insisted that the perfect male image be an uncluttered one that could only be achieved through a perfectly tailored coat. As symbols of Victorian respectability and products of the English tailor's art, both the frock and morning coats were staples of the masculine wardrobe from the middle to the end of the 1800s.

Besides the morning coat and frock coat, by the 1860s a shorter jacket, the lounge jacket, had become a popular form of apparel for informal country and seaside wear. It had a looser cut for greater comfort, resulting in part from the elimination of the waist seam. One of its distinctive features was its visible pockets. Its form survived basically unchanged from 1870 until the end of the century and formed the basis for the man's jacket we know today. At the end of the 1860s an important variation of this style, known as the Norfolk jacket, developed. It was cut full, belted, and pleated front and back. Unlike the lounge jacket, however, it was only worn in the country. Another variation of the short jacket, one with patch pockets, which had been worn somewhat earlier for cricket and tennis, became the forerunner of the popular blazer of the 1880s and '90s, when it was used only for sports wear.

WOMEN'S CLOTHING: 1840–1870

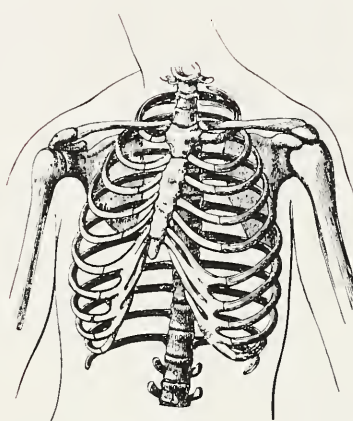
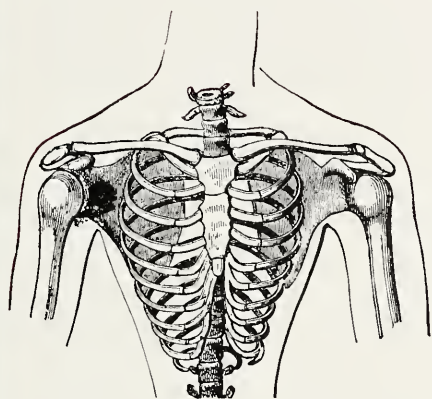
Throughout the Victorian age the focal point of the fashionable woman's silhouette was a slender waist. By its exaggerated smallness, such a waist emphasized the physical and symbolic sites of her womanhood, her larger breasts and hips, thus imparting the information that her role centered on childbearing in what was basically a family-oriented society.

The garment that permitted a woman to achieve the illusion of an extremely slender waist was the corset. Even young girls wore them, compressing their

waists to unnaturally narrow dimensions. Corsets were often directly responsible for women's fainting spells and sometimes caused permanent damage to their health. As early as 1829, a Scottish doctor and health reformer, Andrew Combe, had written an article about the ill effects on a woman's physical well-being that might result from a lifelong use of tightly laced corsets.¹ By mid-century he had been joined by others as vocal as himself, such as the American Amelia Bloomer, after whom bloomers were named.² Although separated by an ocean, Combe and Bloomer shared the belief that women's dress could be healthy, beautiful, utilitarian, and sensual. Their ideas, however, were accepted only by a very few.³

Although the most direct method of securing the desired effect of a diminished waist was through the use of a tightly laced corset, other design elements were employed at various times to emphasize and enhance this part of the female anatomy. In the 1840s the popular bell-shaped skirt carried the observer's eye upward in a gentle, but continuous movement from ground to waist. Yet its necessary foundation of numerous layers of petticoats added an even greater restriction to the already tight lacing at the waist. This exaggerated confinement of a woman's body was carried yet further by the encasement of her arms in sleeves with armholes positioned two or more inches below the tops of her shoulders. This allowed only very limited movement.

The basic symmetry created by the bell-shaped skirt of the 1840s did not change in the '50s, although, like the Victorian economy, the skirt's silhouette continued to expand. Replacing the layers of petticoats, which could no longer support the wider skirts, the crinoline became popular. Developed from a horsehair petticoat during the late 1830s,



“Has it occurred to you that there is one article of woman’s dress so constructed that, when clasped around the waist, it applies this pressure—not to the extent of instant death indeed, but yet to such an extent that those who wear it live at a dying rate? The corset is the name of this instrument of human torture.”

Caroline E. Hastings, M. D. (quoted in Woolson, ed., 1974, p. 54).

and with insertions of steel, whalebone, or cane in its base, the crinoline performed its function as an undergarment that supported the skirt with great efficiency. Its use continued into the 1860s, although the symmetry of the bell-shaped skirt was modified: its front was flattened and its back was slightly extended (pl. 3).

The crinoline was synonymous with the fashion of the 1850s and '60s. An engaging weapon of flirtation, it caused the skirt it supported to sway in sensuous movements. It also may be said to have been an appropriate symbol of the Victorian bourgeois world, as the bold expansiveness of the skirt over the crinoline proclaimed the ostentation of the woman who wore it and the economic security of the world she inhabited.

THE IMPACT OF THE SEWING MACHINE

The sewing machine, although invented in the 1840s and improved throughout the following decade, was not mass produced—and was therefore not available to most middle-class consumers—until the 1860s. When it became affordable it revolutionized the field of fashion for the housewife, as it already had begun to transform the commercial, ready-made clothing industry.⁴ It also inspired the creation of new businesses, among which were family sewing machine and pattern-making companies.⁵ The need to create strong, durable threads compatible with sewing machine use also spawned a new industry. In fact the sewing machine had a significant effect on every aspect of clothing production.

Although early sewing machines were expensive, their cost could be justified because of what they could do and the time they could save by comparison with handwork. Sewing machines were one of the first widely advertised consumer products. Perhaps the one maker most instrumental in reaching the retail con-

sumer was the Singer Sewing Machine Company. Its owner, Isaac Singer, applied his enormous energies to an aggressive selling campaign directed toward the housewife. He glamorized selling, acquired patents to improve his machines' functions, and eventually brought their price down, making the home sewing machine a practical and affordable consumer appliance.

The invention of the sewing machine and the thousands of patents that made it practical contributed to the rapid growth of the mass-produced clothing industry in the nineteenth century, especially in America.⁶ New machines for cutting and pressing clothes made their manufacture faster and cheaper. In order to keep this burgeoning industry functioning and growing, it was necessary to have a large labor force, which, in the United States, took the form of immigrants, both skilled and unskilled. Improvements in distribution, retailing, advertising, and salesmanship influenced the spread and acceptance of ready-made clothing. Its mass production was an important aspect of the breakdown of class distinctions in America during the late nineteenth century, for the sameness of the clothing produced by these means tended to blur whatever visible social differences remained. By the end of the century it was not always possible to tell city dwellers from country folk or rich men from poor ones.

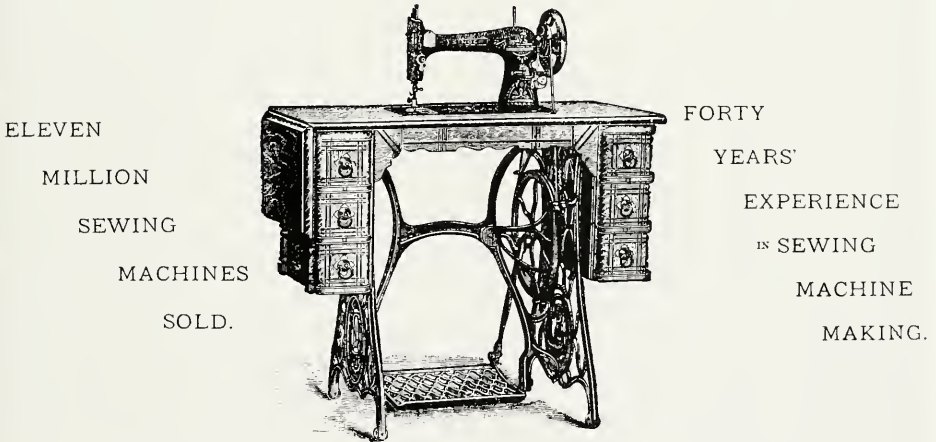
FASHION PUBLICATIONS, DEPARTMENT STORES, AND MAIL ORDER CATALOGUES

Fashion magazines and newspapers, which had gained a respectable group of readers since the eighteenth century, underwent significant changes during the 1860s. Prior to that time most fashion publications were small in size and illustrated with charming, but expensive hand-col-

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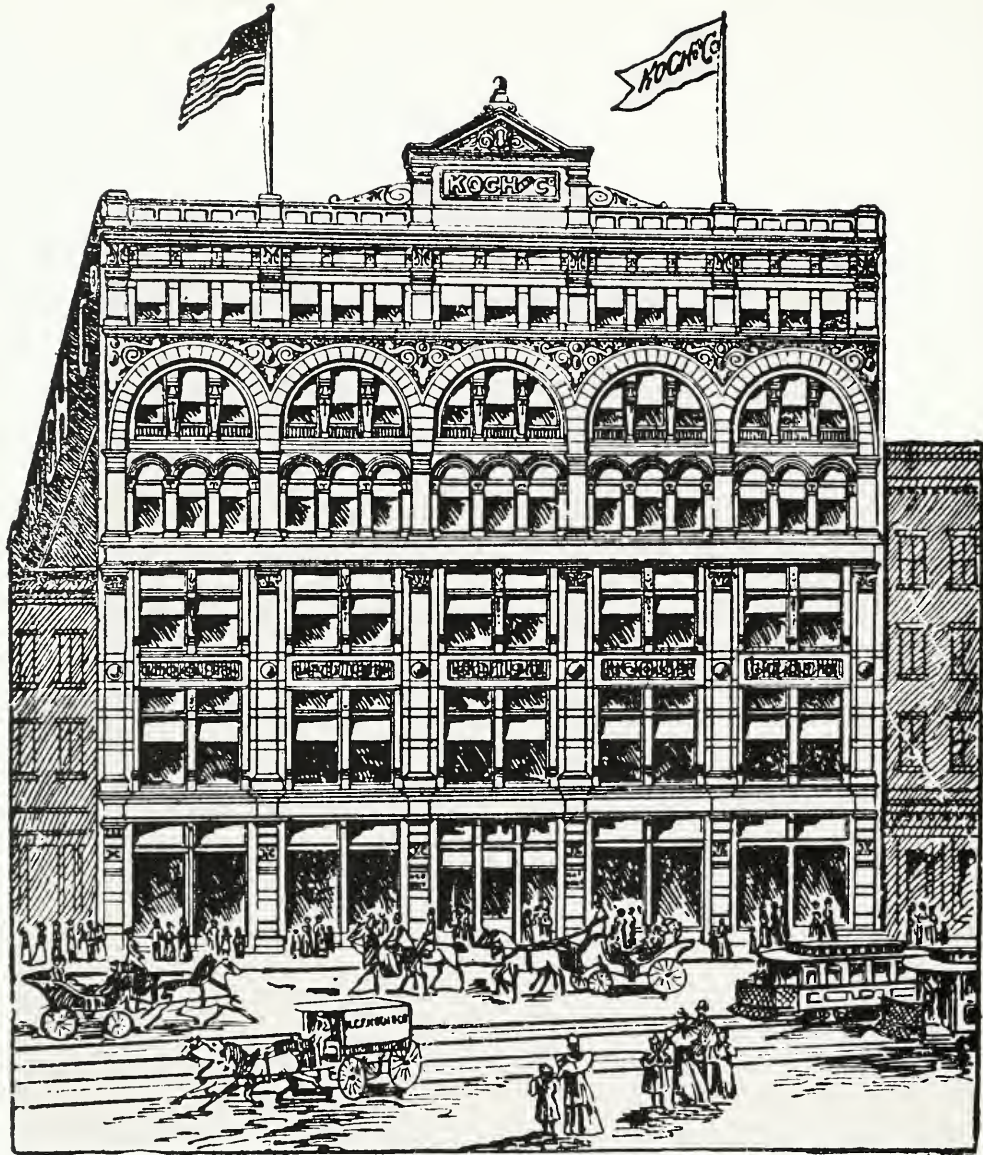
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ored engravings. Their largest audience was the upper middle class. By the 1860s, however, the restructuring of format to include an increased page size, cheaper papers, and less sophisticated illustrations reflected the "invasion of the fashionable world by people of the middle class who depended less on birth and wealth than on ability..."⁷ The sociological significance of this further democratization of fashion was far-reaching and lasting.

Slightly earlier a new pastime had

been added to the daily life of even the most suppressed Victorian housewife: shopping in department stores. This allowed women the freedom to venture into a new sphere of activity, relieved them of the tedium of caring for home and family, and introduced an unprecedented degree of choice into their lives. The establishment of these emporiums of mass merchandising began as early as 1852 in the United States.⁸ Their importance and growth were a result of the variety of services they offered under one

roof, available for the first time to all segments of society. These included a one-price policy for everyone, ready-made clothing for the entire family, equal treatment regardless of wealth, and the availability of a large range of choices.

For those who lacked transportation from their homes to the department stores, newly formed mail order businesses provided a viable solution. One of the first companies to begin selling by mail was Montgomery Ward. Only three years after it opened for business in 1872, its one-page catalogue had grown to seventy-two pages. This catalogue finally evolved into a fully illustrated offering of a diversified selection of goods from apparel to home furnishings. Rural residents, who formed a large percentage of the American population during the nineteenth century, were quick to take advantage of the new way to purchase needed commodities.

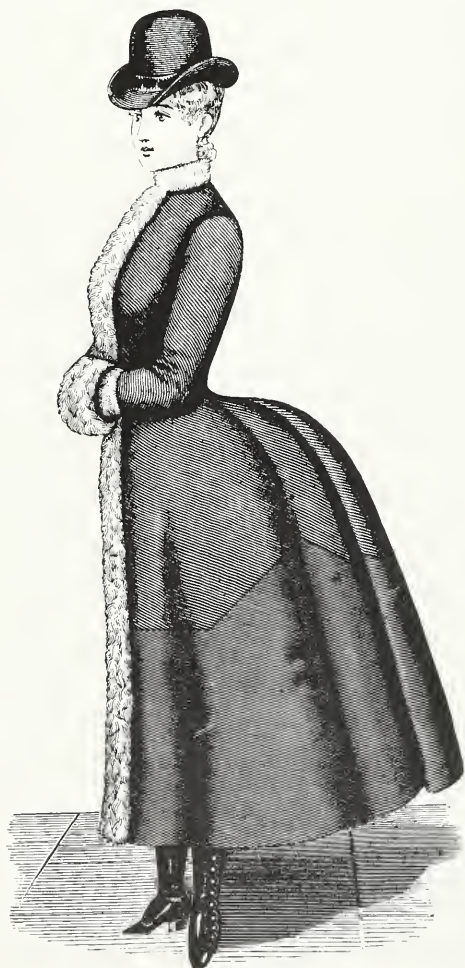
While clothing for all members of the family comprised one of the major categories of merchandise available through mail order catalogues, a profitable adjunct was the offering of patterns for the housewife to use when sewing her own garments. This not only permitted her to save money but also gave her the opportunity to recreate the fashionable styles disseminated in fashion magazines such as *Harper's Bazar*. Even the fashions of Charles Worth,⁹ the premier designer of this period, were widely imitated. Novel mass-produced textiles of great richness and variety were available to help accomplish this task.

NEW CONCEPTS IN HEALTH AND ATTIRE

The radical changes in the clothing industry by 1868 were partially responsible for the discontinued use of the crinoline and similar supports. Many factors contributed to a change in the aesthetic of female beauty from idealized frailty to a more full-bod-

ied, lush type of female. In women's clothing of this period emphasis was assigned to the profile. From below the waist—still encased in tight laces to diminish its size—bunched, poufed, and embellished mounds of fabric extended at the back, supported by a bustle, thus pressing the wearer forward into a stance known as the "Grecian bend."

By the 1870s serious attention began to be given to the creation of women's clothing that combined considerations of health and exercise with those of contemporary ideals of beauty. A public outpouring of criticism against the evils of crowded cities, the destructiveness of



commercial greed, and the disadvantages and excesses of ever-changing fashion that occurred around the same time was one of the precursors of a new concept of women and their role in society—indeed, a new concept of their very essence. Some “strong-minded” women who behaved and dressed daringly were slowly making their presence known both in the public arena and on the printed page. Nevertheless, in a society dominated by men, assailing the male fantasy of the gentle female whose tender ministrations could instantly overcome the daily irritations experienced by the family breadwinner was a monumental endeavor.

The struggle for women’s rights engaged the attention of many reformers, both male and female, during the last forty years of the nineteenth century. There was much powerful opposition to the women’s rights movement. In the press and elsewhere, women’s rights advocates were constantly accused of being unfeminine; in newspaper descriptions and cartoons the aspects of women reformers’ behavior and dress considered to be masculine were emphasized and distorted. These distortions totally disregarded the fact that elements of male attire occasionally were used in female fashions. Toward the end of the century neckties, boaters, long lapels, and “mannish” shirts had become a part of many feminine wardrobes, such as those depicted in the popular illustrations of Charles Dana Gibson’s much-admired American beauties.

The numerous historical revivals characteristic of the Victorian period were, in fact, also protests in favor of certain types of social reform. The Pre-Raphaelites, for example, retreated from the crassly commercial world in which they lived to the unreality of medievalism. Although they attempted to recreate the clothing of the Middle Ages and Renaissance, they were



unsuccessful as fashion innovators. However, they did influence a change in contemporary notions of ideal feminine beauty to a type that echoed the appearance of women painted by the Italian Renaissance artist Sandro Botticelli: long-limbed females with sinuously curving bodies. The dress style most suited to this type of figure was the “princess” gown, which first became popular in the mid-1870s. Cut in one piece with the bodice, it was designed to be close-fitting and to flow in a continuous line from shoulder to foot. A gentle curve was the result, but only when the wearer stood upright. One of the major drawbacks of the princess style was that it was uncomfortable to wear, and it was soon superseded.

"HYGIENIC" CLOTHING AND CHANGING ATTITUDES IN HEALTH REFORM

In 1873 a noted lecturer and literary essayist, Abba Louisa Goold Woolson, arranged a series of lectures that she and four women physicians would give in Boston. These lectures, published at a later date, were all on the subject of health reform in dress. Their principal concerns were the unhealthy, even crippling aspects of contemporary dress. Mrs. Woolson summed up her own position in a brief statement: "[Contemporary] dress violates health in three important ways: first, by its compression of vital parts of the body; second, by its great weight; and, third, by the unequal temperature which it induces."¹⁰ Although none of the lecturers directly confronted the problem of dress as a symbolic affirmation of women's subjugation, Mrs. Woolson—who could as well have been speaking in 1984—did assert: "With proper clothing and proper training, [girls] will be enabled to grow up into strong-bodied, strong-limbed, clear-headed, warm-hearted, rosy, happy women, proud of their womanhood, surrounded by husband and children, if they prefer domestic life, but held in equal honor and esteem, if, for any reasons which may seem to them good, they choose to devote themselves, with self-reliant energies, to other labors...."¹¹

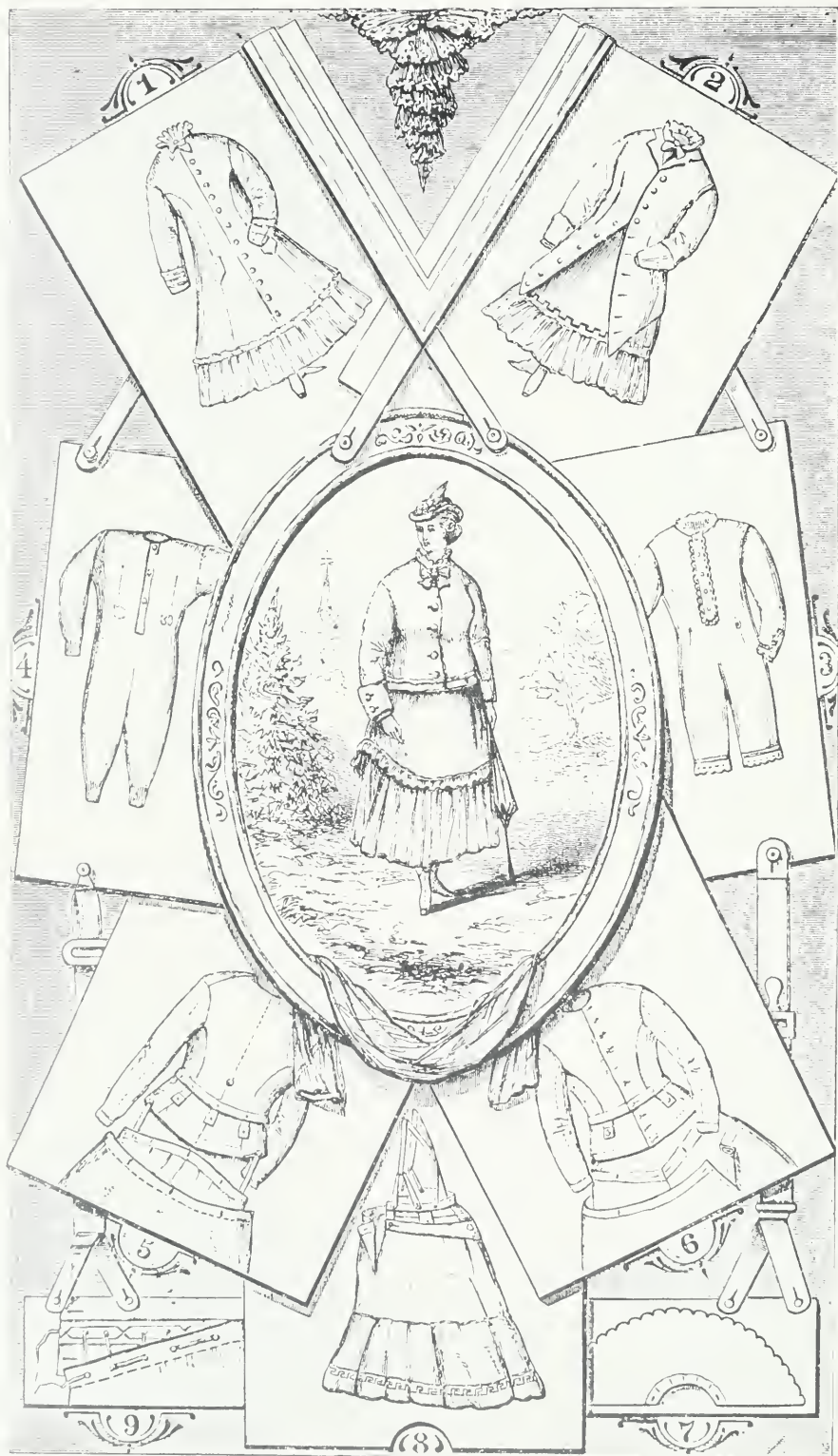
The effect on fashion of people like Mrs. Woolson was minimal. The first serious attempt to reach large and diverse segments of the population in order to improve the hygienic aspects of dress occurred in 1884, the year of the International Health Exhibition in London. As the most comprehensive exhibition on the subject to take place in the nineteenth century, it included among the displays clothing specifically designed to be "sanitary." Nonetheless, the feminine

fashions shown were meant to enhance the women wearing them. This exhibition had an entire section devoted to dress for sport. One garment, the divided skirt, made its appearance for the first time in one of the displays, consistently arousing spectator curiosity and attracting large crowds. For the remainder of the decade, this bifurcated garment was the subject of impassioned controversy. It was only in the 1890s that it gained public acceptance.

One influential person involved with the International Health Exhibition was the English architect E. W. Godwin. He agreed with many nineteenth-century physicians that for dress to be hygienic, it was necessary to wear wool next to the skin to purge the body of impurities through perspiration. Also active in the cause of hygienic clothing was a German physician, Dr. Gustav Jaeger,¹² who insisted that the wool must be knitted and that it should not be bleached or dyed. His views were already known in England, and a garment of the type he favored was shown in the International Health Exhibition.

Dr. Jaeger's knitted underwear was a boon for the active person, providing two important features: flexibility and warmth. His knitted garment provided the basis for many twentieth-century innovations. Most clothing reformers in England in the 1890s, however, did not find the sanitary aspects of the garments advocated by Dr. Jaeger to be particularly suitable to their cause. Geared more to the principle of democracy than to hygiene, they favored the wearing of English tweeds, viewing them as appropriate dress because of the fabric's humble origins. These endorsements for the use of tweeds eventually led to their status as high fashion for country wear.

Dr. Jaeger's advice regarding the avoidance of dyes in textiles generally went unheeded by the public. Fashion ar-



biters, however, possibly under the influence of noted artist James McNeill Whistler and of William Morris and his Arts and Crafts associates, did begin to favor more subdued colors. The bright, heavy, or oppressive color schemes (both in fashion and home furnishings) which had dominated Victorian taste for so long were replaced after 1890 by less harsh color combinations and an avoidance of startling contrasts.¹³

THE FEMININE SILHOUETTE: 1880-1900

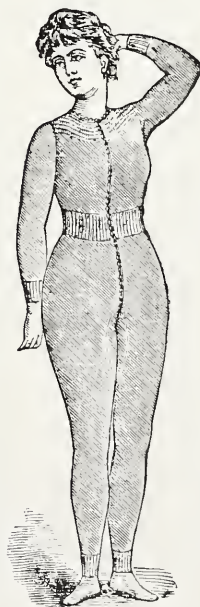
In a seeming backlash against reform of any kind, by 1884 fashionable women had given up what was thought to be the "natural" appearance of the princess cut. It was replaced by a style that almost mimicked the one popular around 1870, whose profile presented its best view. However, the stiff extension at the back just below the waist was now accompanied by a tight-fitting bodice and sleeves, dispensing with all frills, folds, and bows (pl. 4). By 1890 the fullness still evident at the center back of the straight skirt was the last vestige of the bustle. What had started in the first year of the decade as a small puffed sleeve was expanded to enormous widths by 1895.¹⁴ To balance the unusual width of this vast sleeve, the bottoms of skirts were widened, while their tops lay smoothly over the hips. A series of cleverly cut gores was the basis of this type of skirt construction.

After 1895, when sleeve widths began to decrease again, a more sinuous line appeared, one that was greatly influenced by the fluid curves of Art Nouveau. The cut of the underlying support—a newly designed corset, flat in front and extended in the back—forced the posture into an undulating configuration. Its ingenious construction not only threw the prominent bust forward but also forced the hips backward; thus did women achieve the desired silhouette

and remain in bondage to fashion's dictates. The 1890s valued the mature, statuesque woman. Having the adolescent figure of a young girl was a disadvantage, for clothing was designed to reinforce the well-rounded shape of a robust female. The Victorian ideal of the nurturing, fecund woman continued unaltered, though possibly bruised.

As early as 1888 the Rational Dress Society of England had advocated the replacement of the corset with a chemise of strong, supportive fabric to which a divided skirt could be buttoned instead of the usual petticoat. The reformers in this organization were opposed to "any fashion in dress that either deforms the figure, impedes the movement of the body, or in any way tends to injure health"; they advocated "health, comfort,

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and beauty”¹⁵ as the bases for adopting any style of clothing. As late as 1897 the women in this movement were still trying to convince the members of their sex to wear garments that allowed for greater comfort and less fatigue, particularly so that exercise in the open air could be truly beneficial, as well as more enjoyable. Nevertheless, most women in the 1890s were unwilling to implement the wisdom of this message. The important end-of-the-century innovation in women’s fashion, the practical three-piece suit with its plain skirt, tailored jacket, and loose blouse, *could* be adapted for dress or sports wear with great ease. However, it took two world events that occurred during the early years of the twentieth century—the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 and World War I—to inspire truly radical changes in the way women perceived themselves and what they wore.

STEPPING OUT INTO THE COUNTRY

In the second half of the nineteenth century walking was an accepted form of exercise for both men and women. It required neither special clothing nor any equipment and was a necessary adjunct to many social functions (pl. 5). Like walking, fishing did not necessarily require special clothes or great strength, and it also was considered a suitable activity for women. Fishing offered a socially acceptable opportunity for men and women to be together; in fact it was an advantage for a man to accompany a woman because he could navigate the boat, bait the hook, and remove the fish if her delicate sensibilities prevented her from doing so herself.

If a woman did not wish to fish but did enjoy the pleasures of boating, rowing and canoeing were athletic activities in which she could participate without incurring the censure of society. For these forms of limited open-air exercise,

women did not require special clothing, although a relaxation of some of the more restrictive aspects of fashion was seen, such as the shortening of skirts to barely touch the ground.

Horseback riding provided abundant exercise and was used to imply elevated social status. It was an expensive sport, requiring special, costly clothing for both sexes, as well as the ability to maintain or rent horses. Members of the middle class who aspired to a higher social position were free to adopt the accoutrements of horseback riding as an affirmation of their enhanced place in society. Aside from the pleasures derived from the sport, horseback riding was an integral part of the activity of hunting.

The wide skirt popular from the 1840s to the '60s did not interfere with an Englishwoman’s ability to horseback ride, since she did so on a sidesaddle. In fact fashion’s concessions to the needs of the female rider were minimal and did not alter the basic feminine silhouette of the time. Although women wore breeches beneath their riding skirts, these were not revealed until the 1920s, when





women, like men, began riding astride. The fine tailoring of English feminine riding habits of the 1860s and '70s was the basis for the tailor-made wool dresses of later years.

At about the same time that bustles found wide acceptance, the new sport of roller skating came into vogue. By the 1870s it had become so popular that buildings with beautifully crafted wood floors were constructed specifically for roller skaters in many American cities. Women, with the drapes of their backward-thrust skirts and the curls of their backward-poufed hair flying in seeming abandonment as they mastered the intricacies of the sport, conquered it with aplomb, creating a picture of supreme confidence that was matched by the aggressive forward-backward push of their fashionable silhouettes.

The winter counterpart of roller skating was, of course, ice skating, a sport ideally suited to Victorian culture. Although requiring skill, it could be learned by men and women alike. It was an excellent excuse for courting couples with leisure time to be together in close physical proximity. In most other social situations, touching or holding hands was not permitted. Ice skating did not require special clothing, except for slightly shorter skirts for women (pls. 6–7). Moreover, the cost of a pair of ice skates was minimal, so that the sport was widely practiced by all classes.

The explosion in reform activities during the Victorian era was paralleled by a similar one in sports activities. Ball games, which had been played mainly by children or country folk for most of the first half of the nineteenth century, had become socially acceptable and widely practiced by the 1860s. Two games that attracted popular attention on both sides of the Atlantic were lawn games: croquet and tennis. Croquet, the first to appear,¹⁶ was enjoyed by both sexes during the

1860s. It was an ideal sport for women of the time, as it required little strength and no special clothing. The wide crinolines worn during the '60s did not interfere with women's ability to participate in this game. Their skirts were altered only by the addition of a looping device with interior cords that permitted the skirt to be raised slightly. For formal games men, like women, wore fashionable attire: frock coats and top hats. For games where a casual appearance was acceptable, they wore lounge jackets, knickerbockers, and hats. Croquet provided advantages beyond its obvious benefits as exercise. Since it could be played by both men and women, it possessed a desirable social attribute.

It was not until the 1870s that tennis captured the interest of the English leisured classes. Its roots have been traced to a handball game played in ancient Greece, but its more modern form was introduced in England in 1873 by Major Walter C. Wingfield. By the following year it was being played in the United States. In 1877 tennis tournaments began their long history at Wimbledon. This was also the year during which a popular pastime for women was the embroidering of tennis aprons—practical clothing accessories with pockets in which to carry tennis balls—for their own use.

At first the influence of tennis on fashion was slight. Some women demonstrated their need for practicality by wearing special shoes with India rubber soles. Also, jersey fabric for tennis dresses was introduced in 1879, although the dresses were made in the then-current mode. This fabric offered the advantage of ease of movement because of its elasticity. Not until the 1880s was the fitted bodice, then the fashionable style, replaced by a belted jacket with somewhat larger armholes, thus permitting a bit more freedom for the female player. In fact this jacket

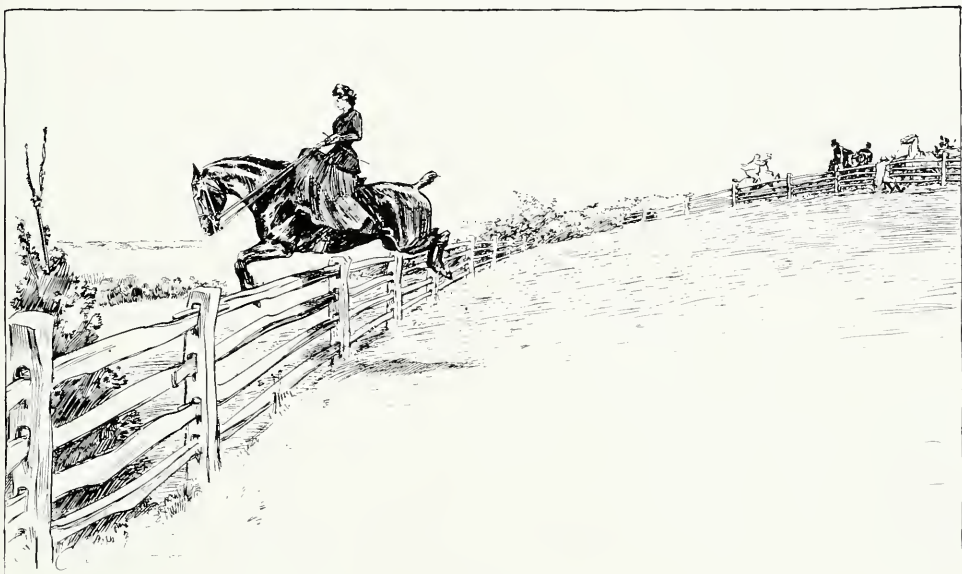


became one of the forerunners of the 1890s blouse, in turn a component of the three-piece suit for women.

By the 1880s the lounge jacket and knickerbockers, commonly worn by men on casual occasions, were also used as clothing for tennis. Trousers were often worn instead of knickerbockers. The double-breasted “reefer,” a short, boxy jacket, was popular for tennis until the 1890s, when it was replaced by white or striped flannel blazers with patch pockets. Such blazers looked so smart with white flannel trousers that the ensemble

made in their design and mechanical parts—wheels (now of the same size) with wire spokes, pneumatic tires, ball bearings, brakes, cushioned saddles, and accessible handlebars—which added to their comfort and safety.

Because of the modest cost of cycling, its importance as transportation, and its felicitous effects as a form of exercise, women began cycling in earnest by the late 1880s (pl. 8). Although it gave them unprecedented mobility, the question of what was both proper and possible for women to wear when bicycling often



became standard on the tennis court. For additional comfort men took to wearing rubber-soled, soft canvas shoes.

The introduction of bicycles caused a great change in the urban scene. Although bicycles were already being produced commercially by 1870, their early forms, such as the “bone-shakers” in England, were not universally popular. Even the high-wheeler, introduced in 1873, was impractical, as it was difficult to balance. Convenient, safe bicycles were developed only in the 1880s. During that entire decade improvements were

arose, especially because of the number of accidents caused by their long skirts. By the 1890s feminine cycling dress had been adapted to the new sport. Divided skirts, even knickerbockers, were used. When jackets were worn, they frequently were beautifully tailored, creating attractive ensembles.

Golf was another sport that made use of the new styles so appropriate for bicycling. Long the national sport of Scotland, it was not until the 1890s that it gained its first acceptance in America, becoming popular only in the twentieth



century. Like riding, golf was a sport confined to the leisured upper classes. Usually played at exclusive clubs, it became an affirmation of social status.

Although golf appeared to involve a minimum of physical activity, it actually required physical coordination, skill, and stamina. While playing, men wore what by the 1890s had become well-established sports clothing: the Norfolk jacket with knickerbockers. To this they added one frivolous touch, patterned stockings, and one practical touch, a peaked cap made of tweed. Women's main concession to the needs of the sport was the hats they wore. Those bold enough to have begun playing the game in the 1880s might have worn a hat borrowed from male attire, the deer stalker, while in the '90s they would have worn a boater, also derived from a man's hat.

Over a period of decades, changing social, economic, and artistic concepts influenced—even determined—transformations in Victorian dress. As in all ages fashion was a slowly evolving process, with past and future shapes visible in the clothing of any given moment. Transitions in style resulting from particular ways of proportioning and cutting garments bore a direct relationship to existing conditions and the spirit of the age. Nowhere, perhaps, was this more apparent than in the history of leisure and sports wear, whose origin was linked directly to profound changes in everyday life and which has become increasingly important in our own world.

1.

Dr. Combe also wrote a book, published in Edinburgh in 1834, with the ponderous title *Principles of Physiology applied to the preservation of Health and to the development of physical Education*; see Newton, 1974, p. 20.

2.

Contrary to common belief, Amelia Bloomer did not invent bloomers, nor was she the first person to wear them or to suggest that others do so. Two American women, Mary Crayen and a Mrs. Noyes, were the first to appear in public (in 1848) wearing bifurcated garments. When Mrs. Bloomer saw them thus attired, she recognized the practical aspects of their unusual clothing and began wearing similar trousers herself. She also wrote about them, advocating their use in her journal, *The Lily*. It was not she, but the press, that first used the word "Bloomerism," and it was the public that erroneously attributed the invention of bloomers to her. See Bradfield, 1972, p. 43.

3.

Charles Reade, a novelist who wrote in the 1850s, was—like Dr. Combe and Mrs. Bloomer—ahead of his time. He not only valued a woman for her wit and intelligence but also recognized

the advantages of bloomers as a practical garment for women. In his short book *The Course of True Love Never Did Run Smooth*, the beautiful heroine of the second story in the series of three, "The Bloomer," is a woman embodying these qualities. Made timid by the realization that her endorsement of the bloomer's use could ostracize her from society, she was quickly won over to its cause when she comprehended the hypocrisy of its opponents:

When the conversation began, Miss Courtenay looked down on the bare idea of the bloomer costume.

But its vituperators shook her opinion by a very simple process,—they gave their reasons.

"It is awkward and absurd," said one, as by way of contrast, she glided majestically to the piano to sing. As she spoke her foot went through her dress, to the surprise of—nobody.

See Reade, n.d., p. 108.

4.

From the germ of an idea that originated in Europe, many men contributed to what came to be a totally American invention, the sewing machine. Overly generous historians have credited Elias Howe, Jr., with having been its sole inventor. Although his

first American patent, issued on September 10, 1846, was for his second machine, his contribution was but a small part of a complex process that led to the eventual success and functionalism of this versatile appliance. Howe's ownership of important patents, however, did provide him with the basis for a successful suit against the Singer Company. Unfortunately it was also the basis for a landslide of similar legal actions within the infant sewing machine industry that almost crippled it early in the 1850s. Orlando B. Potter, the president of one of the important companies of that time, Grover and Baker, solved the problem by convincing the other leading manufacturers in the industry—Howe, Wheeler and Wilson, and Singer—to pool their patent rights and form a combine. They agreed to this strategy, and the name they selected was the "Sewing-Machine Trust and/or the Sewing-Machine Combination." See Cooper, 1968, p. 41.

5.

Whereas fine tailoring and *haute couture*, both nineteenth-century phenomena, traditionally have been identified with England and France, respectively, the great paper pattern industry was first founded in the United States. See Arnold, 1966, p.4.

6.
"From 1842 to 1895 the United States issued 7,339 patents on sewing machines and accessories" (Kidwell and Christman, 1974, p. 75).

7.
Newton, 1974, p. 41.

8.
"Some firms were outgrowths of dry goods stores, and a few had started as specialty clothing houses. Marshall Field and Carson Pirie Scott and Co. arrived on the Chicago scene in 1852 and 1854 respectively" (Kidwell and Christman, 1974, p. 157).

9.
When the Englishman Charles Worth opened the first *haute couture* establishment in Paris in 1858, he changed the taste and buying habits of fashion-conscious women of the upper classes on both sides of the Atlantic.

10.
Like many other nineteenth-century physicians, these four doctors deplored the harmful effects of the encasing corsets all women had to wear in order to be fashionable. No one expressed this more succinctly than Dr. Mary J. Safford-Blake when she stated, "The thumb-screws of the inquisition might have been more painful to bear, but they certainly produced less harm than do the unyielding steels of her corset...." See Woolson, ed., 1974, pp. 23, 125.

11.
Ibid., p. 178.

12.
The famous London store that

sells beautiful woolen clothing, Jaeger's, was established by Dr. Jaeger; see Newton, 1974, p. 103.

13.
Women who followed the dictates of the Aesthetic Movement (with which both Whistler and Morris, as well as E. W. Godwin, were identified) preferred "dull greens, peacock blue and dull, rich reds, or mellow amber-yellows." See Aslin, 1969, p. 157. Gilbert and Sullivan, in their comic opera *Patience*, satirized the taste of the proponents of this movement, especially Oscar Wilde and Algernon Swinburne, models for the leading characters, Bunthorne and Grosvenor:

...an ultra poetical,
super-aesthetical,
out-of-the-way young man!
A pallid and thin young man,
A haggard and lank young
man,
A greenery, yallery, Grosvenor
Gallery,
Foot-in-the grave young man!

See Taylor, ed., 1941, pp. 167–68.

14.
In the 1830s the expanded version of the puffed sleeve was called a *gigot* (from the French word for "leg of lamb"). In the 1890s, when the puff once again widened, it was known as the "leg-of-mutton" sleeve. The shoulder seam of the *gigot* sleeve was below the natural shoulder, constricting arm movement, whereas the seam was moved into its natural position just above the edge of the shoulder for the leg-of-mutton, permitting arm movement.

15.
Newton, 1974, pp. 116–17.

16.
"True croquet was brought from Ireland to England in the 1850s and Lord Lonsdale, the sporting peer, was one of the first to lay out a court on the lawns of his home in the Lake District" (Cunnington and Mansfield, 1969, p. 61).

SOURCES FOR LINE ILLUSTRATIONS

The line illustrations used throughout this catalogue are nineteenth-century illustrations reproduced from the following periodicals and books:

- pp. 2–3** *A Little Incident*, drawing by Charles Dana Gibson from *The Gibson Book I*, n.d., not paginated.
- p. 10** *Worth Tailor Gown* from *Harper's Bazar* 26 (1 July 1893): 525.
- p. 13** Corset illustrations from *The Delineator* 29 (April 1887): 8; rib cage illustrations and quotation from Woolson, ed., 1974, 47, 54.
- p. 15** Singer sewing-machine advertisement from *The Delineator* 41 (May 1893): 4.
- p. 16** *Koch and Company Department Store, New York City* from *The Delineator* 43 (April 1894): 436.
- p. 17** *Misses' Coat and Muff* from *The Delineator* 31 (January 1888): 29.
- p. 18** Golf outfit, drawing by Charles Dana Gibson from *The Gibson Book I*, n.d., not paginated.
- p. 20** Illustration from Woolson, ed., 1974, 182.
- p. 21** Advertisement from *Harper's Bazar* 26 (23 September 1893): 787.
- pp. 22–23** *Princesse Panier Polonaise and Walking Skirt* from *Harper's Bazar* 12 (16 August 1879): 517.
- p. 24** *Riding Habit for a Lady* from *Godey's Lady's Book* 107 (June 1883–January 1884): 124.
- p. 25** *They Take a Morning Run*, drawing by Charles Dana Gibson from *A Widow and Her Friends* by Gibson, 1901, not paginated.
- p. 26** *The First Lesson* from *Godey's Lady's Book* 107 (June 1883–January 1884): 396.

COLOR PLATES





Multicolored Silk Taffeta Dress; Red Wool Twill Girl's Dress; Forest Green Wool Twill Boy's Suit; United States
1867-68; 1868-70; c. 1875 (nos. 1, 30, 32).





Dark Olive Green Silk Faille Dress; Natural Pongee Silk Boy's Dress; United States
1886; c. 1885 (nos. 11, 38).









CHECKLIST

WOMEN'S CLOTHING

1.
DRESS (bodice, skirt, and belt with back panels)
United States, 1867–68

Multicolored small *chiné* floral sprigs scattered on small black and cream windowpane-checked silk taffeta; banded trim of green silk taffeta edged with black and white silk fringe; green silk taffeta-covered buttons

Gift of Dorothy Dixon
M.83.231.8 a,b,c

2.
DRESS (bodice and asymmetrical skirt)
United States, c. 1868–72

Brown and tan silk taffeta; two-color self trim of alternating rows of bands and ruffles; exterior back pocket; two-color self piping and cream silk button decoration; brown silk needle-lace buttons on bodice front

Gift of the Estate of Dorothy Gould
M.82.272.1 a,b

3.
DRESS (bodice and trained skirt with symmetrical, attached back overskirt)
United States, c. 1872

Beige silk and cotton; rust silk box pleat and Van Dyke point trim; silk-covered sculpted buttons

Costume Council Fund
M.83.194.9 a,b

4.
DRESS (bodice and trained skirt with attached overskirt)
England, c. 1875

Pale green silk and wool; knife-pleated self trim; matching silk bows at elbows; self buttons

Gift of May Routh
M.82.180 a,b

5.
WALKING DRESS (bodice and skirt with asymmetrical, attached, draped overskirt)
United States (?), c. 1878–80

Dark green wool serge; machine-embroidered “paisley”-patterned wool trim; rust silk twill on bodice front and cuffs; self box pleating around hem of skirt

Gift of Mrs. Frances Osthaus
M.71.106 a,b

6.
DRESS (bodice and symmetrical, puffed-back skirt with train)
United States, c. 1880

Green-beige silk faille; self-piped crenelated trim on cuffs, neckline, false revers, and train; self box-pleated hem; carved mother-of-pearl buttons

Gift of Mrs. Marie Lathrop Tuttle
38.19

7.
DRESS (bodice and skirt)
United States, c. 1880
Label: *WATKINS robes, Chesnut St., Louisville, KY.*

Dull gold silk taffeta; cream *ciselé* silk velvet on dull gold satin ground in skirt panels and bodice trim; knife pleats at hem; mother-of-pearl buttons with marcasite centers

Gift of Mrs. W. R. Kilgore
CR.86.57.1 a,b
8.
DRESS (bodice and skirt with attached overskirt)
United States, c. 1879–82

Lavender-and-white-striped silk taffeta combined with olive-drab silk taffeta; knife-pleat and flat bow trim; mock polonaise (“Dolly Varden”); lavender silk needle-lace and crochet-covered buttons

Gift of Mrs. James Lockhead
CR.346.65.1 a,b
9.
DRESS (bodice and symmetrical, puffed-back skirt)
United States (?), c. 1882

Gray-green silk taffeta; darker green bias ruching, ruffles, and ribbon trim; dyed and carved mother-of-pearl buttons

Mrs. Alice F. Schott Bequest
M.67.8.59 a,b
10.
RIDING HABIT (jacket and shaped skirt)
Austria, c. 1885
Label: *Holznarth, Wein, I. Kärnthnerstr. 40*

Heavy black wool serge; braid trim; silk-covered buttons

Gift of the Pasadena Art Museum
63.26.8 a,b

11.
DRESS (bodice and skirt)
United States, 1886

Dark olive green silk faille; blue, red, brown, and gold *ciselé* velvet trim; asymmetrical, vertical knife pleats; hip and bustle drape; matching bonnet with olive green satin ribbon ties

Gift of Mrs. Albert Weiland
59.13.1 a,b/.2
12.
BICYCLING ATTIRE (fitted jacket and three-quarter-length bifurcated skirt)
United States, 1888

Jacket: blue-gray wool; white wool and metallic gold braid trim; gilt brass military-style buttons

Skirt: natural linen; white cotton tape trim; bifurcation concealed by front panel; mother-of-pearl buttons

Gift of Bullocks, 7th and Hill streets, Los Angeles
M.74.24.27 a,b
13.
CULOTTE
United States, c. 1890–1900

Unbleached heavy linen; composition buttons

Gift of Mrs. Louise D. Wilhelm
CR.340.65.5
14.
SUIT (double-breasted coat, bodice, and skirt)
United States, c. 1895

Brown, black, and white wool tweed; leg-of-mutton sleeves; dyed mother-of-pearl buttons

Gift of Mrs. Grace O. Johnston Fisher
A.2354-5 a,b

15.
DRESS (bodice and skirt)
United States, c. 1896

Dark green wool twill with brocaded motif of white, orange, and red interlocking circles; leg-of-mutton sleeves; false revers

W. T. Wohlbruck Collection
37.24.12 a,b

16.
RIDING HABIT (jacket, waistcoat, and skirt)
France, c. 1900

Jacket and skirt: black wool broadcloth

Waistcoat: copper-colored pattern with rust, blue, green, and gold on charcoal-gray silk satin ground; carved mother-of-pearl buttons

Wilma Leithead Wood Bequest
58.34.10 a–c

17.
SUIT (Norfolk-style jacket and skirt)
United States, c. 1900–1905

Tan cotton corduroy; composition buttons

Gift of Mrs. William James Kuehn et al.
CR.283.64-2 a,b

MEN'S CLOTHING

18.
TROUSERS
United States, c. 1870

Dark brown, orange, and gray tattersall-checked cotton; button fall front

Mrs. Alice F. Schott Bequest
M.67.8.2

19.
COAT (double-breasted)
United States, c. 1880

Gray-green wool twill; black silk satin twill lapel trim; black basket-weave silk buttons

W. T. Wohlbruck Collection
37.24.146

20.
COUNTRY SUIT (coat, waistcoat, and breeches)
United States, c. 1875–1900

Butternut-colored heavy wool twill; leather buttons

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Chauncey J. Hamlin, Jr.
CR.69.34 a–c

21.
COAT
United States, c. 1890

Black heavy felted wool; sheared beaver collar and cuffs; silk braid trim; corded frog-and-toggle fasteners

Promised Gift of Kent Elofson
TR.7221

22.
SUIT (modified frock coat, waistcoat, and breeches)
England, c. 1900
Label: *Sandon and Co. Savile Row, London*

Heather-gray wool worsted; composition buttons

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Chauncey J. Hamlin, Jr.
CR.69.41 a–c

23.
FORMAL DAY SUIT (cutaway jacket, waistcoat, and trousers)
United States, c. 1900

Black wool jacket and waistcoat; gray-and-black-striped wool trousers

Gift of Mrs. Brandner W. Lee, Jr.
M.66.61.3 a-c

24.
MORNING SUIT (cutaway coat and
waistcoat)
United States, c. 1900-10

Black wool broadcloth; black silk braid
trim; black silk buttons

Gift of Mrs. Howard P. Devol
CR.74.2.3 a,b

CHILDREN'S CLOTHING

25.
GIRL'S DRESS
England, c. 1860

Blue and gray cotton organdy printed in
floral and plaid "ribbon" pattern; lace-
trimmed, petal-shaped short sleeves

Gift of Mrs. P. A. Appleyard
M.67.35.2

26.
GIRL'S DRESS
United States, c. 1860-65

Multicolored printed silk in pink and
white *ombré* "ribbon" and dot pattern
(fabric c. 1828); pink silk braid trim;
matching triangular fichu; floral-
patterned glass buttons

Del Valle Collection
34.6.1 a,b

27.
BOY'S SUIT (jacket and pants)
United States, c. 1862

Oatmeal-colored wool tweed; rust silk
braid trim; flat brass buttons

Gift of Mrs. Rens R. Effinger
M.36.10.12 a,b

28.
BOY'S DRESS (dress and cape)
United States, c. 1865

Dress: light orange wool; silk soutache
trim; scalloped sleeve edges bound with
buttonhole-stitch embroidery; small,
conical brass buttons

Cape: matching fabric; small, turned-
down collar; white china silk lining

Gift of Lillian Charlotte Bridgeman
A.4666.39-2 a,b

29.
GIRL'S DRESS (dress and overskirt)
United States, c. 1869

Red-and-white-printed cotton calico;
white cotton trim; ruffled overskirt (prob-
ably added when dress was updated);
mother-of-pearl buttons

Gift of Mrs. Frances Presley
A.2289.30.53

30.
GIRL'S DRESS (dress, overskirt, and bolero)
United States, c. 1868-70

Red wool twill; black silk velvet ribbon
trim; black wool braid edging; glazed
cotton lining; faceted black glass buttons

Mrs. Alice F. Schott Bequest
M.67.8.18 a-c

31.
GIRL'S DRESS (jacket-bodice and puffed-
back skirt)
United States, c. 1870-75

Cerulean blue silk faille; matching silk
velvet trim; silk velvet buttons

Mrs. Alice F. Schott Bequest
CR.448.67.15 a,b

32.
BOY'S SUIT (jacket and kilt)
United States, c. 1875

Forest green wool twill; black glass buttons

Gift of Mrs. Raymond Hoover
CR.293.64-1 a,b

33.
Boy's SUIT (jacket, waistcoat, and breeches)
United States, c. 1875

Black silk velvet; black wool braid
"Hussar" trim; wool-covered buttons

Gift of Mrs. Janet Felix
A.6196.52-1 a-c

34.
GIRL'S DRESS
United States, c. 1877-80

Burgundy, white, and gray silk taffeta;
smocked front; small back bustle; bur-
gundy satin bows; mother-of-pearl
buttons

Gift of Mrs. Thomas H. Crawford
M.69.28.2

35.
BOY'S DRESS
Switzerland, c. 1880

White figured cotton; elaborate machine-
embroidered cotton eyelet trim

Gift of Mrs. John Arnett
M.81.315.4

36.
Boy's SUIT (shirt and detachable
breeches)
United States, c. 1880

Cream wool twill; mock laced front;
mother-of-pearl buttons

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Dixon
56.19.2

37.
GIRL'S DRESS
United States, c. 1880

White cotton piqué; white cotton
machine-embroidered eyelet trim;
appliquéd white cotton braid in scrolling
pattern; mother-of-pearl buttons

Mrs. Alice F. Schott Bequest
CR.448.67-20

38.
Boy's DRESS (coat, pleated skirt, and
breeches)
United States, c. 1885

Natural pongee silk; painted abalone-
shell buttons

Gift of Mr. N. A. Abell
M.78.113.1 a-c

39.
GIRL'S COAT
United States, c. 1895

Cream wool; white silk ribbon trim; goat-
hair collar edging; carved mother-of-
pearl buttons; matching bonnet

Gift of Mr. Frank Betz
CR.371.66.1 a,b

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